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ABSTRACT

Parental separation and divorce can have a critically adverse effect on the academic performance and achievement of adolescent students. The psychological and social disadvantages can significantly interfere with students reaching their full potential for success in school. Information is provided on the scope of divorce in society and its emotional, social, and academic effects on children. Review of the literature yields a number of insights: marital dissolution has been shown to have potentially grave adaptive consequences and negative results for many children; family structure has been identified as the main cause for a lower grade point average among children of divorce; and research also suggests that income may be responsible for the difference. Children who have recently experienced a divorce are in a crisis situation and can be expected to have a change in their behavior. Males have been found to experience greater emotional, social, and academic problems. Effective support for children of divorce is discussed. Areas of inquiry include in-service training for educators, flexible scheduling of school activities to accommodate single parents, the role of the non-custodial parent, and involvement in co-curricular activities. A list of readings with a brief synopsis of each is appended. (EMK)

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The Influence of Parental Separation and Divorce on Adolescent Academic Achievement

Developmental Issues

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January 25, 1997

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Abstract

The Influence of Parental Separation and Divorce on Adolescent Academic Achievement. Nisivoccia, J.D., 1996: Research Report Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Divorce in the American Society/Adolescent Life Transitions/ Effects of Divorce on Children/Support for Children of Divorce.

Thesis Statement: Parental separation and divorce can have a critically adverse effect on the academic performance and achievement of adolescent students. The possible psychological and social disadvantages can significantly interfere with many students reaching their full potential for success in school.

This research report provides information on the scope of divorce in our society and its emotional, social, and academic effects on children. Marital dissolution has been shown to have potentially grave adaptive consequences and negative results for many children. Divorce usually brings about many changes in a child's life that produces disorders. Family structure has been identified as the main cause for a lower grade point average among children of divorce. However, a pattern suggests that income may be responsible for the difference. Children who have recently experienced a divorce are in a crisis situation and can be expected to have a change in their behavior. Males were found to experience greater emotional, social, and academic problems.

Analysis of the data revealed that educators need in-service training and that flexible scheduling of school activities needs to take place to accommodate single parents. It is important that children maintain contact with both parents and that non-custodial parents assume a role that includes child rearing responsibilities. Also, children of divorce need to be encouraged to become involved in co-curricular activities and to focus on academic achievement. Children of divorce need understanding, guidance, and emotional support so that their lives can be healthy and productive.

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Dedication

This research project is dedicated to the 30 percent of students in Belleville High School , Belleville, New Jersey who live in single parent homes. These students may be prone to the emotional and social difficulties influenced by divorce, which can interfere with their academic performance.

Thesis Statement

Parental separation and divorce can have a critically adverse effect on the academic performance and achievement of adolescent students. The possible psychological and social disadvantages can significantly interfere with many students reaching their full potential for success in school.

Introduction

To gain insight into this statement, psychological and social studies on the subject matter were gathered and reviewed. It was found that a great deal of research has taken place, documenting the effects of divorce on children. It was also found that divorce is an experience that is now part of the lives of an increasing number of students nationwide.

The amount of children in our nation that experience their parents' divorce increased from 22% in the 1960's to 46% in the 1980's (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990). Wegman (1986) noted that in 1983, approximately one million children experienced their parents' divorce, doubling the amount from 20 years ago. Sorrentino (1990) has shown that this trend is continuing into the 1990's, when he reported that the divorce rate was almost tripled the amount compared to in the 1960's. These statistics indicated that divorce is a problem that has increased in our society and will continue to disrupt the family structure of many children. A 1996 U.S. Census Report has indicated that in the last three years, the upward trend in divorce has stabilized. It is not known if this leveling factor is a pause in the divorce rate or a result of more positive interpersonal relationships of parents.

Furstenberg, Nord, Peterson, and Zill (1983) noted that the rising incidence of divorce suggests that the institutions of marriage and the family are in serious trouble. Their findings indicated that this increasing trend in marital discord is greatly hindering the current well-being and future prospects of children who are socialized most effectively with two parents present in the home. Divorce is an effect which can seriously impair the function of the family as a socializing agency.

Life Transitions

During life transitions, especially those of adolescence, children may be more vulnerable to emotional distress. Marital dissolution during this time has been shown to have potentially strong negative results for many individuals (Bloom, 1978; Cowen, 1980; Felner, Farber & Primavera, 1980). Studies have shown that the effects of family disruption due to divorce has pointed to higher levels of aggression and acts of violent behavior in children (Felner, Farber, Ginter, Boike & Cowen, 1981). Other studies have shown heightened anxiety, intense anger, loneliness, and somatic complaints (Wallerstein & Kelley, 1975); along with sadness, fear, and depression (Kelley & Wallerstein, 1976).

For adolescents, parental divorce has also been shown to have potentially grave adaptive consequences. Schoettle and Cantwell (1980) have shown that adolescents who experience family disruption due to divorce have an increased possibility of impulse control problems and displays of antisocial behavior. Research by Hetherington (1972) and Young & Parish (1977) found parental divorce to be associated with lower self-esteem, problems with sex role development, and greater difficulties in interactions with members of the opposite sex. Wallerstein and Kelly (1974) found an association between the loss of external values in adolescents who experience parental divorce.

Farber, Primavera, and Felner (1983) had presented a study that indicated that parental separation and divorce may be a highly stressful life transition for adolescents. They indicated that, "as with young children this life transition appears to lead to heightened vulnerability and risk for emotional difficulties" (p.71). Because of divorce, patterns of problem behavior include increased difficulties of interpersonal relationships, sexual identity, and academic performance, as well as heightened levels of emotional difficulties, along with drug and alcohol use.

While divorce is generally associated with increased stress and emotional behavioral difficulties among adolescents, several aspects have a mediating effect. The amount of family conflict experienced by the adolescents, their religious background, their age, and place in the sibling order were reported to have a vital impact on their efforts to adapt to this transition (Farber et al., 1983). Sex differences were also reported in relationship to the use of intervention services as coping agents. Farber et al. (1983) noted, "female adolescents were found to seek mental health counseling more frequently in an attempt to cope with the resultant adaptive tasks of parental separation and divorce than their male counterparts" (p. 71).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) emphasized an ecological analysis of divorce discussing the power of the exosystem's influence on family structure and the child. He suggested that the mother's capability in handling her child after divorce was influenced greatly by the assistance and support received from friends, relatives, and the child's father. He also indicated that the stress of divorce became even greater if the mother had to enter the work force because the psychological development of the children in the family is influenced not only by what occurs in their new environment but also the environments their parents spend a considerable time in, such as their workplace. He classifies divorce

as a form of chronosystem which focuses on a life transition and that such transitions occur throughout the life span and serve as a direct force for developmental change.

Developmental Status

The type of behavior problems and coping mechanisms differ for children of different ages. Young children's responses to situations are dealt with by their limited cognitive and social competencies, their dependency on their parents, and their restriction to the home (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989). Hetherington et al. (1989) indicated that, "following a divorce young children are less able to appraise accurately the divorce situation, the motives and feelings of their parents, their own role in the divorce, and possible outcomes" (p. 305). Thus, young children may blame themselves for the divorce, may fear abandonment, may misperceive their parents' behavior, and may harbor thoughts of reconciliation (Wallerstein, Corbin, & Lewis, 1988). However, the cognitive immaturity that creates anxieties for the young child of divorce may sometimes prove beneficial over time. Research by Wallerstein et al. (1988) found that 10 years after divorce many young children have few memories of either the past parental conflict or their own earlier fears and suffering. Hetherington (1989) added to this finding by indicating that after a time period, many children have also developed a very close and important relationship with the custodial parent. It was also found that about one third of these children continue to experience anger at the unavailability of the non-custodial parent and may experience depression. But, most adapt reasonably well, if they do not encounter new personal or family stress factors. In contrast, Wallerstein et al. (1988) has noted that adolescents who retain memories of the conflicts and stress associated with the divorce may be more consciously troubled.

Adolescents, like young children, experience considerable initial emotional pain and anger when their parents divorce. However, they are usually better able to accurately assign responsibility for the break-up, to resolve loyalty conflicts, to more effectively cope with economic changes, and to deal with a new family structure than young children. The older adolescents may also be able to take advantage of available support systems to deal with the additional stresses (Hetherington, Stanley-Hagan & Anderson, 1989).

Weiss (1979) revealed that many divorce-effected adolescents experience premature detachment from their parents. He documented that one third of older children and adolescents become disengaged from their families. If this disengagement leads to greater involvement in a prosocial peer group, constructive relationships, or school attainment the results can be positive. However, Hetherington (1987) indicated that many of these children of detached families become involved in antisocial groups and activities with disastrous outcomes.

Following remarriage, many children experience a resurgence of problem behaviors (Bray 1988; Hetherington et al., 1985). Most young children appear able to eventually form an attachment with a competent step-parent and accept them in a parenting role. The developmental tasks of early adolescents make them especially vulnerable and most of the time unable to adapt to the transition of remarriage (Brand, Clingem-Peel, & Bowen-Woodward, 1988; Hetherington, 1987).

Older adolescents, because they may have more self-confidence and resources, may confront and question some aspects of family function and roles that younger children would not. Furthermore, remarriage may not be as aversive with older adolescents because they may be anticipating their departure from the home (Hetherington & Anderson, 1987).

A Crisis Situation

Children who have recently experienced a divorce are children in a crisis situation. Fuller (1989) indicated that "during the early time period, children can be expected to display behaviors that make up the process known as the grieving cycle, characterized by denial, anger, depression, and finally for many adjustment or acceptance" (p. 11). It is also common for many children and adolescents to feel guilt and fear during this grieving cycle. The guilt resulting from feelings that they were responsible for the divorce and fear that they might lose the other parent. During this time period, children need understanding, sensitivity, and emotional support so that their lives can continue normal until the crisis ends (Fuller 1989).

An important factor in child development is that a child's anger at loss can be channeled incorrectly or poorly and that separation anxiety may become overpowering. Repressed anger due to divorce may be channeled into destructive patterns. According to Munger and Morse (1992) these patterns may include, "compensatory lying, self-doubt, self-estrangement, compulsive rituals, malevolent dreams, and many other behaviors" (p. 102). In regard to separation anxiety, the child may repeatedly fear abandonment.

Escapism or grief-reaction can be another outcome that needs to be understood. Escapism, the desire to run away, to hide, or disappear, may surface as an expression for repressed anger. It may take the form of hostile behaviors designed to obtain sympathy and attention from both parents. Depression as a form of grief-reaction may result in the child's life, reflecting the pain of loss, an unsettled lifestyle, imperfection, and a projection of an uncertain future (Munger & Morse, 1992). Munger and Morse (1992) revealed that, "children stand helpless in a divorce situation and may become so frustrated that they might strive toward unreal and unattainable psychological compensation" (p. 102).

Also, feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and helplessness may falsely suggest that they did something wrong, thus sharing in the responsibility of the divorce. Many times a loss of self-esteem is a result of the helplessness feeling the child of separated or divorced parents experiences.

Divorce usually brings about many changes in a child's life that provides disorders. Relocation or a weakened relationship with the non-custodial parent are examples of these changes that can produce disorders. Also, because of the added responsibilities, the custodial parent may become less available. Hetherington (1979) pointed out that many families usually experience a significant decrease in income which might involve the custodial parent having to join the work force.

According to a 1984 U.S. Census Bureau Report, 90 percent of all custodial parents are women and 53 percent of these households have annual incomes of less than $10,000. Financial resources are not available for most households affected by divorce. Living below the poverty line has implications for all family areas from nutritional and medical concerns to the physical and emotional environments (Fuller, 1989).

Studies on the Problem of Divorce

By the late 1970's, research on the American family structure and its impact on a child's development, particularly divorce, became the focus of significant attention. Major research studies concluded that divorce did have negative effects on children (Furstenburg, Nord, Peterson, & Zill, 1983; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1978; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). These studies provided needed insight into the influence of family structure on child development and behavior. They also have shown that a child's school performance

can be adversely affected by parental divorce. Amato (1994), Morrison and Cherlin (1995) and Neighbors, Forehand, & Armistead (1992) have provided evidence that children whose parents divorce have more behavioral, emotional, and learning problems than children from two-parent families. These studies have noted that divorce causes negative stresses for children that influence their development and that academic achievement was one aspect that was almost always negatively affected.

Call, Beer, and Beer (1994) and Cherian (1989) found that the grade point averages of children of divorced parents were lower than the grade point averages of children of non-divorced parents. Cherian (1989) also indicated that this was true regardless of socio-economic status. His conclusions, without control for socio-economic status, showed the difference in the grade point averages of the two groups was statistically significant. A similar pattern was maintained when socio-economic status of the parents was controlled.

Mulholland, Watt, Philpott, and Sarlin (1991) collected information using teacher ratings, parent interviews, and questionnaires on 60 children of divorced parents and 36 control children from two parent families. Most of the children, ranging in ages 10-14 from divorced parents, showed significant performance deficits in academic achievement as reflected by grade point averages and scholastic motivation. There was no significant performance deficit in the control group confirming that parental divorce can be a critical event in the academic development of children. It appears that children from two parent homes score higher academically than those students affected by divorce. However, there is a pattern that suggests that income, not family structure may be responsible for this difference.

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) noted that family disruption affected a child's school performance due to the loss of certain resources, with the most significant influence

being the loss of income. Parents with limited incomes have few options concerning the schools their children attend, and these parents rarely can afford extra lessons or any extracurricular activities.

The loss of family resources may translate into both decreased educational opportunities and the stresses associated with not having money. This factor may be especially true for the 53 percent of children of female headed single-parent homes, who live below the poverty level. Research by Fuller (1989) also suggested that the differences in academic achievement or lower grades between children from two-parent homes and homes affected by divorce may be due to lack of money rather than lack of a second parent.

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) stressed that the loss of economic and social resources due to divorce can also affect a child's self-motivation. They found that children who do not expect to go on to college are less motivated to do well academically.

Guidubaldi, Perry, Cleminshaw, and McLoughlin (1983) conducted a nationwide study concerning the impact of divorce on children. The sample included 341 children from divorced families and 358 from intact families randomly selected from first, third, and fifth grade. Data was gathered using parent and child interviews, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, the Wide Range of Achievement Test, the Sells and Roff Peer Acceptance-Rejection Rating, and two teacher rating scales of children's classroom performance, the Hahnemann School Behavior Rating Scale and the Vineland Teacher Questionnaire. The results, which persisted when IQ and socio-economical status measures were controlled, indicated consistent and extensive social-emotional and academic-intellectual differences favoring intact family children. Their findings also showed that, within the divorce family group, boys and older children had lower social and academic scores.

Their research indicated that there is a consistent pattern of adolescent sex differences in adjustment related to divorce. Males were found to experience greater academic, behavioral, and social problems in comparison to both girls from divorced families and boys from two-parent families. Other research studies reinforced this disclosure (Hetherington, et al., 1982; Kurdek & Burg, 1983; Sanrock and Warshak, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1974). The reasons for sex differences are important but have not been adequately researched. Kelly and Wallerstein (1976) believe that boys are developmentally more vulnerable and susceptible to the stress factors of divorce. Warshak and Sanrock (1983) attribute the problem to sex role modeling or the differences to opposite sex child custody relationship typical for boys. Hetherington (1979) suggests that the reason may be sex differences in parenting styles with custodial parents not providing emotional support for males. Hetherington et al. (1989) indicated that parents of sons may remain together longer even in a relationship filled with dispute. Thus, boys may be exposed to more parental conflict before and after the divorce. Also, males seem to view family arguments less positively than do girls (Epstein, Finnegan, & Gythell, 1979). In addition, since males are more likely to respond to stress with anti-social behaviors, firm consistent discipline may be more essential in the development of boys. During and after divorce, the discipline procedures of most custodial mothers toward their sons becomes inconsistent and possibly destructive. Hetherington et al. (1989) also reported that," in times of family stress boys are less able than girls to disclose their feelings and to solicit and obtain support from parents, other adults, and peers" (p. 306). Guidubaldi et al. (1983) concluded, from child interview responses, that boys of divorced families who maintain contact with their fathers perform better on several academic and social measures than those children who do not have regular contact or communication with their father.

Much of the research agreed that regardless of age, most children make an effective long-term adjustment to divorce. Within a two to three year period, they tend to obtain a certain degree of stability. Cherlin, Furstenburg, Chase-Lansdale, Kiernan, Robins, Morrison, and Teitler (1991) gathered evidence from statistical analysis of longitudinal studies of children in Great Britain and the United States. They found that it may not necessarily be the divorce that causes the negative effects on the children but what occurred before parents separate. Block, Block, and Gjerde (1986) had similar findings adding that the conflicts which occurred before the divorce may be more intensifying and have a greater emotional effect for males than females. They recommended that attention be focused on the troubled, intact families as well as the divorced families.

Regardless of when the impact begins, there are several possible explanations for why a child's academic performance is negatively impacted. Cherian (1989) proposed that the home of divorced or separated parents could be a source of emotional problems which might influence the ability and motivation of children to succeed in school. He noted that, "with the absence of either parent, the child could be deprived of parental help, encouragement, and guidance conducive to school work" (p. 358).

The research has repeatedly indicated that there are certain practical implications for parents to help ease the effects of divorce. Several studies recommended that, if the parents can limit their conflict and work together, the child's long-term adjustment is positively enhanced (Grusec & Lytton, 1988; Kline, Tschann, Johston, & Wallerstein, 1989; and Weitzman & Adair, 1988). Comparative studies indicated that there are differences in classroom behavior that might be responsible for lower academic achievement among children from homes affected by divorce. Hetherington (1989) noted

that children of divorce are more apt to be absent from school and tardy than children from two-parent homes. Also, such children, especially boys, are more likely to engage in acting out behaviors. Fuller (1989) emphasized that children tend to conform to the expectations that others hold for them. If children are viewed by others as poor, unfortunate, coming from a broken home, or as unruly, they will likely view themselves in those terms and behave accordingly. Children tend to see themselves and consequently act in ways consistent with the expectations of those people who are important to them.

Effective Support for Children of Divorce

Fuller (1989) believes that there are several things which can be done by parents, educators, and others concerned in an effort to be supportive of children of divorce. Children are most likely to feel uncomfortable with the term "broken home," as it suggests their life is defected, out of order, or not structured. Using the term "single-parent household" can describe the structure without making a negative value judgment. Other supportive actions suggested by Fuller (1989) are as follows:

- Provide in-service training for educators with accurate information on single-parent homes so that their perceptions are appropriate to the children of these households.
- Avoid stereotyping children of divorce since some of the problems faced by these children may be caused by negative expectations based on inaccurate and harmful stereotypes.
- Provide a balanced picture of American families by furnishing educational materials that portray a variety of family styles.

. Employ flexible scheduling when planning school activities so that single parents, that must work, may be able to become more involved in their child's schooling.

A vital factor that divorced parents need to understand is the importance of their child maintaining contact with both parents. Guidubaldi et al. (1983) suggest that, "contact maintenance is of particular importance for boys in mother-custody households" (p. 321). They indicated that the role of the father needs to exist beyond the payment of a monthly check for child support, to assume a role that includes more child rearing responsibilities.

Grusec and Lytton (1988) found that children adjusted better emotionally and socially if they have continued quality contact with the non-custodial parent and if there is open communication within the family. Bisnaire, Firestone, and Rynard (1990) added to this disclosure, indicating that the more time a child spent with the custodial parent, as well as the non-custodial parent, the healthier the child's attitude toward the divorce. He also found that the more contact with both parents added to the academic input of a child's learning, since it gives him or her access to the educational knowledge of both parents. Other suggestions which can assist children of divorce pertain to household routines.

Guidubaldi et al. (1983) recommended that schools need to get involved to help ease the effects of divorce on children. Based on their findings, children who make better adjustments to divorce have more organized after-school activities, watch less television, and have more contact with the non-custodial parent's relatives. Children of divorce need to be encouraged by their parents and others concerned, to become involved in sports, hobbies, co-curricular activities, and to focus on academic achievement. It has also been reported by Guidubaldi et al. (1983) that parents who use mild forms of discipline and have insight to effective child-rearing practices, have children who more readily adjust emotionally to divorce.

It is vital that the needs of young adolescents be met as much as possible. Individual and group support systems for children of divorce need to be provided on the elementary level. Schools need to establish safe, orderly and effective learning environments, along with instituting procedures to better assimilate children of a changed family structure (Guidubaldi et al. 1983).

Hetherington (1989) stressed that schools play an increasingly important role in a child's adjustment to divorce. Her findings showed that the social and cognitive development of young children from divorced families was positively influenced if children were in schools with defined schedules, rules, and regulations and with encouragement for mature behavior. She suggested that, "under stress, children gained security in a structured, safe, predictable environment" (p. 10). She also indicated that for boys, athletic participation was associated with less behavioral problems and increased academic achievement.

This research on the influence of divorce on academic performance does have its limitations. The principal methodological limitation of these major studies, as well as other related studies, is restricted samples. Most of the samples reviewed have been small and limited to specific settings or geographic areas. Samples almost always represented White and middle-class families where the mother had child custody. The results of these limited studies are generalized to the total population of divorced families. Another methodological problem has been the failure of most of these studies to concurrently control for social economic status, age, and sex.

The major limitation regarding the studies concerning divorce and academic achievement is that most of the studies used overall school criteria such as grade point averages, attendance, suspensions, truancy, and referral for discipline problems rather than specific measures of academic or social competencies.

There are several areas related to this issue that have shown the need for further research. Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, Mott, and Phillips (1991), in their National Longitudinal Survey of Youth work, proposed that the area of divorce among Black and Hispanic families is very understudied. They also suggested that children's behavior problems, school performance, and exposure to marital conflict before divorce is an area that must be examined. Another suggestion was to address the impact of paternal visitation as well as parental substitutes on the child's development. Finally, the effects of divorce on age and gender need more attention since there are considerable mixed findings.

Conclusion

Research clearly indicates that divorce can produce a highly stressful life transition for adolescents. Parental separation poses specific adaptive difficulties for many adolescents who experience it.

Studies have suggested that boys of divorced families exhibit significantly poorer academic functioning than girls, because of their multiple behavioral problems. The grade point averages of many boys whose parents divorce show a decline, but studies have shown that the decline actually began in the pre-divorce time and continued post-divorce (Neighbors et al., 1992). The critical variable for this reaction in boys may be due more to the family conflicts that occur prior to the divorce then the actual separation. This finding is congruent with the report of Emery (1988) who noted that marital conflict has a stronger effect on boys than on girls possibly due to their heightened sensitivity to parental conflict. However, it is important to note that developmental transitions of the adolescent must be considered in the explanation of this change. Also, it should be pointed out that

while academic differences do occur in many adolescents, many of the declines are not too extensive. Adequately monitored and supported children seem to maintain their achievement or regain their grade point average in a year's time (Neighbors et al., 1992).

It is essential that the research on the emotional and social effects of divorce on children be used to develop effective intervention to assist in the adjustment of a new family structure. A vital task in assisting and supporting children is to assure them that the divorce was a result of the interpersonal problems of their parents and was not a result of their behavior.

Parents, teachers, and others involved with children of divorce can help by creating a healthy environment which will have a positive effect on the child's future. Knowledge of the child's inner struggles along with committed support, can have a positive effect. By understanding and investing in the whole child with insight into the emotional dimensions, those concerned can genuinely help the child's psychological survival during separation and divorce (Hetherington et al., 1989).

Some children cope extremely well with the trauma of divorce and do not require psychological intervention. They usually receive effective assistance from their parents, teachers, siblings, and friends. Other children do not cope well with the changes associated with divorce. They need understanding, support, and assistance in dealing with their emotional feelings and social behavior.

Fuller (1989) declared that, "perhaps the most important factor in creating a positive environment for children of divorce is for parents and teachers to examine their own attitudes toward these children and determine whether they are accurate" (p. 12). This procedure is crucial because many times adult's perceptions become children's self-conceptions . With proper perceptions and quality support, children of divorce will be as satisfied as most children of two-parent families.

The divorce rate in the United States is the highest it has ever been. A significant number of children have already experienced their parents' divorce, and many more are likely to do the same. This fact makes divorce a problem that will disrupt the lives and development of many children.

In order to approach a complete understanding of divorce and its implications, more comprehensive research will be needed in all of the various aspects associated with it. Knowledge gained from continued research in a variety of areas can offer help to educators and families in dealing with children of divorce and help them to make smoother and positive adjustments following separation or divorce.

How do children of divorce feel about themselves and how they perform in the classroom are important areas of research. Parents and educators need to gain much insight into these areas if they are to effectively help this growing population of children to live satifying lives and to become healthy functioning individuals.

Suggestions for Further Readings

Cowan, P.A. & Hetherington, M. (1991). Family Transitions. Hillsdale, NJ. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Provides detailed information about family environment that contributes to a child's vulnerability or resiliency in coping with their parents' divorce. Some children appear to develop serious or sustained problems in response to adversity while others appear resilient in the face of stressful experiences and develop into competent, fulfilled individuals.

Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, L.J., & Michael, T. (1994). Parental separation, adolescent psychopathology, and problem behavior. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 33, 1122-1131.

Examines the effects of parental divorce on the adolescent. It is a collection of information from a 15 year study of 1000 children who were exposed to parental separation during their childhood. The study found that children exposed to parental separation had elevated risks of substance abuse, conduct disorders, mood and anxiety disorders, and early onset of sexual activity.

Hamilton, W.F. (1993). The effects of a maritally disrupted environment on the latency stage child: In respect to the formal education process. Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 20, 65-75.

Research of marital disruption and divorce on children as it relates to progression through the educational system. Children from disrupted homes fare worse academically than children from intact homes.

McLanahan, S. & Sandefur, G. (1994). Growing up with a single parent. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

Provides a wealth of information about the negative consequences of single parenthood. The focus is on the question, are children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent worse off than children who grow up in a household with both parents?

Nielsen, L. (1993). Students from divorced and blended families. Educational Psychology Review, 5, 177-199.

Research study on the impact of parental divorce, single parenting, and remarriage on elementary and secondary school students. Examined are what factors affect grades and behavior, along with ways in which schools can facilitate students' adjustments and academic performance after their parents divorce or remarriage.

Pett, M.G. (1982). Correlates of children's social adjustments following divorce. Journal of Divorce, 5, 25-39.

A study which examines family correlates of children's social adjustments following divorce. The most significant factor related to a child's satisfactory social adjustment was a positive relationship with the custodial parent. Another correlate included the parents' own ability to maintain emotional and social adjustments following a divorce.

Stolberg, A.L. & Anker, J.M. (1983). Cognitive and behavioral changes in children resulting from parental divorce and consequent environmental changes. Journal of Divorce, 7, 23-40.

A comprehensive account of the emotional impact of divorce on children. The reading indicates that children whose home environments have changed substantially following parental divorce are likely to experience some significant psychological problems.

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Bisnaire, L., Firestone, P., & Rynard, D. (1990). Factors associated with academic achievement in children following parental separation. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 60, 67-76.

Block, J., Block, J., & Gjerde, P. (1986). The personality of children prior to divorce: A prospective study. Child Development, 57, 827-840.

Bloom, B.L. (1978). Marital disruption as a stressor. In Forgays, D.G. (ed.), Primary prevention of psychopathology, Vol. II, Environment Influences, University Press of New England, Hanover, NH.

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